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Authority NND 969046
By NC NARA Date 5/7/02

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION
5813-X-Revised

August 2, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS

SUBJECT:

US Military Personnel Support for Iran

In the back channel message at Tab B, Ambassador Farland directed your attention to an embassy telegram which I have attached under Farland's incoming message and asked for your guidance. The subject is the "blue-suiters" -- the US military technical personnel -- which the President promised to the Shah. We are now getting into the specifics of exactly how this is to be worked out, and it is in that context that Farland sent his message.

Since that message, Farland has sent another regular telegram [Tab C] which removes the issue he raised. However, I want you to be aware of the issue and believe you will want to respond to Farland in any case.

Just to put Farland's initial cable into context and to tell you where we stand on this whole subject, there will be two general questions to be addressed as we work out the kind of mission we send:

--A lot of work will have to be done at the military level in cooperation with the Iranians to identify the jobs that need to be done, and that in turn will affect the numbers of US technicians required. This will take about two months in Iran and here. At that point, there may be some question about the magnitude of our operation. The number could reach 2500-3000 and with dependents that could raise the American military presence toward 10,000. But we cannot intelligently discuss the total number until the jobs to be done are identified, and that is what the Pentagon and the Iranians are working on now.

--The immediate issue is to get clear exactly what kinds of jobs the US is committed to doing, and it is on this point that Farland sent his first cable. For the most part, that is a job for the military to figure out, but there is one policy issue that should be addressed now.

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The issue is that the Iranian air force presented to our MAAG chief projections which include US personnel to occupy operational positions in Iranian units. As we have previously talked about and applied the "blue-suiter" approach, we have not envisioned operational personnel such as air crews to fly the F-4s; our picture has been that we would supply people to work alongside Iranians in their units to train them in the use of equipment and in US operational concepts. In military terms, we have operated and envisioned a very sophisticated on-the-job training program. Now the Iranians have added this new element.

To make this more concrete, our MAAG so far has had requests for: (1) 50 USAF pilots to fly F-4s; (2) 6 boom operators for air refuelers (KC-707); (3) 24 USAF crewmen for P3E aircraft to fly maritime patrol; (4) 12 pilots and flight engineers for air refuelers. The last two requests could be met by civilian contract personnel as well as by USAF men. Other requests could surface from the army and navy.

The issue, therefore, is whether as a general practice we will draw a line short of manning combat elements of Iranian units with USAF personnel.

Ambassador Farland in his first embassy telegram proposed that this line be drawn. He used it tentatively when faced with the initial Iranian proposal. He proposed telling the Iranians that our concept is to expand the well defined technical training teams which have operated in Iran so far but to draw a distinction between those and the assignment of US personnel for on-line operational responsibilities. Farland would make it clear that we are prepared to help in every way possible but recommended telling the Iranians now that an operational role "is not possible and was not contemplated in previous discussions." This could be discussed fully with the Shah, so it would not appear that we were backing out on a promise. Presumably the Shah himself has an interest in not looking as if his forces are being run by the US.

As I understand it, US forces do have arrangements with some of the countries of the British Commonwealth for exchanging operational officers. The logic is that if we were some day to conduct joint operations, as we have in the past, it would be useful for each side to understand the operating procedures of the other. We could do this on a small scale with Iranians, too, if it seemed mutually beneficial. However, that exchange relationship is a somewhat different concept from sending active-duty US military personnel to operate some combat elements of the Iranian forces.

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US operational personnel could be provided if necessary, but since that so far is a relatively small portion of the overall job, it is worth considering some of the problems that would arise. The main one at home is the issue of our intimate military involvement in ways that would give other governments some control over further US involvement. The Congressional implications are obvious. Then the question of doing this for others like the Saudis or Pakistanis might arise. Also, if the Shah were to use his military forces against someone in the Gulf with Saudi opposition, for instance, we would face the problem of whether to allow our personnel to participate in such an operation.

The most important consideration, which stands in a class by itself, is that the US has made a major issue with the USSR for its operational role in Egypt. Our doing the same in Iran--especially in the wake of Sadat's decision--would have implications that you can assess better than I. Simply moving 2500-3000 advisers into Iran may have some implications, but I assume they are manageable.

The basic point, it seems to me, is that we can do most of what the Shah wants without getting into these problems. A substantial enlargement of our technical assistance field teams can make a major contribution to speeding up the training and effectiveness of the Iranian forces, while our doing the job for the Iranians is not all that helpful in the long run. In the few cases where operational people are required for a time, civilian contractors could do the job and we might even let a few USAF technicians slip in as an exception. But as a general rule to start, it might be wise to stop short of operational personnel in combat units.

My assumption is that this issue really was not addressed by the President at all in Tehran, and in any case the Shah himself has now told his people that he does not want Americans in an operational role. After Farland's initial cable, he was informed by Court Minister Alam that Iran did not envisage an operational role for US technicians and that these proposals were the result of overzealousness at lower levels. This essentially removes the issue, but I proposed that you still give Farland an answer to his question.

RECOMMENDATION: That you approve the message at Tab A to be sent back-channel to Ambassador Farland and that I use this as guidance in formulating Farland's formal instructions.

Approved

Other

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~~SECRET/EYES ONLY~~

~~██████████~~ CHANNEL

TO: AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
FOR: AMBASSADOR FARLAND/EYES ONLY
FROM: THE WHITE HOUSE/HENRY A. KISSINGER

NP 0000, CP
NO-12345
Tab A
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August 2, 1972

I have read Tehran's 4467, and Hal Saunders has involved himself in formulating the formal response to it. I apologize for the delay in my own response. As you note I have been traveling again. Now I have read Tehran 4639 which seems to resolve the issue, but I want you to have the response in any case.

For your personal guidance only, this is one of those cases where the commitment made was a broad one without specific reference to the kinds of details which we must now address. My own feeling is that the distinction you described in your initial telegram--that we should do all we possibly can to provide technical assistance and training short of actually having US personnel occupy operational positions in the Iranian forces--is a sensible one as a general practice. However, it was very important that this not be handled in such a way as to dissipate the advantage gained from the President's very forthcoming response. Your talk with Alam seems to indicate that we are over that hurdle.

If you need to discuss the subject confidentially any further, you might consider noting the following points:

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--The Pentagon and MAAG have been instructed to work with the Iranian forces to identify the tasks where US personnel can be useful. You understand this will take a couple of months in Iran and in Washington. We want to be sure we are organizing ourselves to do this properly and do not want to go at it piecemeal and find later that we have to go back and start over. You are sure that consultations will go smoothly. We will assure that they go as quickly as possible.

--We continue to envision our role as working alongside Iranians with a training rather than an operational mission. We would like to maintain that distinction for two important reasons: (1) Operational involvement would raise domestic opposition over military involvement which we could otherwise avoid. (2) having attacked the Soviets persistently for their operational role in Egypt, we would prefer not to assume that role now ourselves, and we want to avoid anything that would make it appear as if Iran were somehow dependent on US forces. Since training is the main mission, we feel almost all of what the Shah wants done can be done this way and we do not feel making this distinction as a general practice will significantly limit the effectiveness of the new program. If there were a few cases where minor exceptions seemed logical for a period, we could certainly be flexible.

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You may not need to use this, but I did want to confirm that we are in accord with the distinction you have made.

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